

at her stocking top right where it clipped onto one long, black garter.

"You're more like it," she said while I watched. "One night last week I was all feathers and Arpege for this peach-fuzz kid with hair down to here who said I shouldn't be plastic. He said he just wanted me to be natural.

"I figured he was after some old-fashioned bareass but when I came out of the bathroom he was eating out of the refrigerator. He gave me the once over and said I didn't look that fat with my clothes on but who could be natural anyway with her cunny shaved like a heart.

"Is that something or not? What kind of kids are they raising out there, I'd like to know. You think I'm pretty don't you baby and what about these brand new spike-heeled pointy-toed black patent leather shoes."

ROYCE NEWPORT MONEY

had everything including monogrammed sandwiches but after graduation he refused to go into business with his father. He wanted to get out on his own, see where his head was at and find out if there wasn't more to life than getting and spending.

No, Royce did not want to be carried on his quest by faithful servants. He wanted to hitchhike.

A grizzled old farmer gave him his first lift. He was a man whose father had lost everything in the Dust Bowl and he himself had eaten an ant hill, but he said he wouldn't trade places with Howard Hughes.

A madame on the skids took him as far as Collinsville. Hell, she'd been through as many fortunes as there are days in the week and between the good times took second billing in a stag smoker act named "Raoul & The Swine Woman." But she was happy, yes sir!

Outside of Waco he met a gambler, a man who had never won a bet in his life. He was sitting way in the back of a truck stop because he'd lost his clothes betting that a mummy would be next out of the rest room at the House of Pies. Was he happy? As a clam.

It was like that clear across the country and back: poor but happy, salt of the earth, laugh and let the world go by.

At home Royce crowed to his father who smiled and pushed a button to reveal them all, a cast of thousands with his money in their sweaty hands.

Royce was crushed. He wanted to kill himself and be buried in potter's field. His dad gave him a platinum gun with his name on it, then showed a film of his funeral, a get-together that made "The Feast of Paradise" look like a Kappa Sig beer blast.

Royce sighed, picked up a pen, and got down to work.

MY UNCLE MAX

lived by himself in a little place on Blythe St., not far from the waterworks. He was my mother's brother, the baby of the family. I was an only child, oldest and youngest at the same time.

My mother wanted us both to settle down, she must have said it a million times. I knew it meant practicing the piano or reading Longfellow, anything but bouncing a ball off the side of the house. Uncle Max knew it meant some nice girl my mother had dug up. "But Ada," he'd say, "I don't want a nice girl," and she would be just as shocked every time and my father would smile a little and tuck himself into the evening Star.

Uncle Max could do anything with cars; his name was on the lips of every Kaiser owner for 50 miles. He liked his work and went at it 7 days a week rain or shine until one winter he took sick. My mother nursed him and while she had him down talked about who would do this next time because she certainly wouldn't be around forever and there he'd be in that drafty shack all by himself and she knew this girl.

She must have scared Uncle Max good because when he was up and around he married Iris Wood who had worked down at the cleaners for as long as I could remember.

Iris took to marriage, she got a phone and sent Max to the store. When he wasn't eating Del Monte green beans and Underwood sandwiches, he dove into the alligator mouths of Packards and stayed there until one day he went to St. Louis for some parts and came back with a woman.

They were out at the Moonlight Motel for almost two weeks and then I heard that the woman had run off. I knew what that meant but I pictured her pounding down the hard road anyway, her tits bouncing.